

Our first reading picks up from the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel again after our celebration of Mary's Assumption. Remember that Ezekiel is an exilic prophet. He was taken in the second wave of deportation (597 BC) to Babylon and is essentially in a Jewish refugee camp along the river Chebar.

Thus far, we've heard about the strange vision that he saw with the storm cloud and the four living creatures with outstretched wings. These figures have four faces in what eventually symbolize the four gospels: human (Matthew), lion (Mark), ox (Luke), and eagle (John).

These four figures support one who had the appearance of a man sitting upon the throne. In short, Ezekiel realizes that he is seeing the glory of the Lord. The God of Israel is with Ezekiel in exile. The Lord calls Ezekiel to announce why they are in Babylon.

Today we hear about a symbolic action wherein Ezekiel carries luggage through a hole in the wall during the day. At first, this strikes us as quite odd. However, it's important to realize that prophets regularly used symbolic actions as teaching tools.

For example, the Lord told Jeremiah to wear a loincloth (13:1). He then told the prophet to hide it in the cleft of the rock. Jeremiah then went and got the loincloth, which had become soiled. The loincloth symbolized Israel clinging to the Lord. Unfortunately, through idolatry and wickedness, they had become soiled like the loincloth.

Additionally, earlier this week the Lord told Ezekiel to eat a scroll, which had words written on the front and back (Ez. 3:1). The scroll tasted as sweet as honey. Symbolically, God's word is sweet. It is delightful!

Today we hear about the symbolic action of carrying luggage through the hole of a wall. Even today, symbolic actions are powerful and teach us. Think of holding your hand to your chest during the national anthem (pledge to your country), a referee throwing a yellow flag (penalty), or a football player pointing to the sky after scoring a touchdown (giving thanks to God).

Our Catholic faith is *full* of symbolic actions: Sign of the cross (Trinity and our redemption), standing at the gospel (attention), or kneeling during the Liturgy of the Eucharist (reverence). In short, actions speak louder than words! Ezekiel's actions remind the people that the Lord has carried them off to exile. Of course, He will bring back again. Like Ezekiel, may our actions symbolize our love for the Lord! A faith-filled and joyful life is the best witness for sharing our beautiful faith!